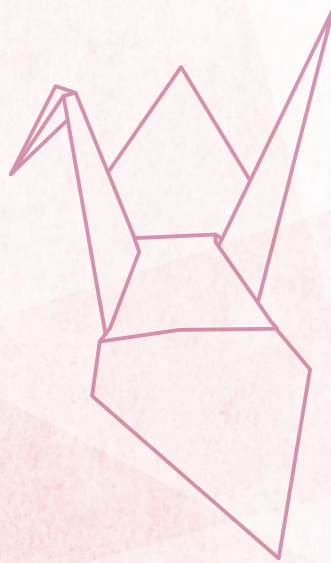


Chapter 7

FUTURE DIRECTION



7. Future direction

During the current process of conducting this Voluntary National Review (VNR), Japan has engaged in comprehensive dialogues with diverse stakeholders and solicited public comments in addition to convening the SDGs Promotion Roundtable. The inclusion of stakeholders' self-evaluations and initiatives in this report has provided a meaningful review of Japan's efforts and accelerated its progress towards achieving the SDGs. However, there have been observations pointing to a lack of data-driven evaluation and analysis of progress, as well as lessons learned from ongoing initiatives, highlighting the need for improvement in the methods of progress assessment.

Considering the inputs from the exchanges with the private-sector members of the roundtable, experts, and civil society during this review, the current situations and challenges facing Japan's efforts to achieve the SDGs, as well as future directions, are outlined below.

(1) Current Situations and Challenges

At the UN Summit of the Future, world leaders agreed to significantly advance progress towards achieving the SDGs. However, as previously mentioned, global challenges such as worsening climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and infectious diseases, coupled with severe international circumstances, have heavily impacted the global pursuit of the SDGs. Japan is no exception, and furthermore, faces unprecedented challenges of a rapidly declining birthrate and aging population.

Despite these daunting circumstances, Japan's efforts towards achieving the SDGs have shown definite progress, although various challenges remain. Japan stands at a critical juncture where ensuring sustainability while achieving a growth-oriented economy is essential, necessitating a further strengthening of these initiatives. Japan remains steadfastly committed to intensifying and accelerating efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030, while contributing effectively to the global community's endeavors.

(2) The Direction of Future Efforts

A. Japan will further advance efforts to transform solutions to societal challenges into engines for growth. It is essential to simultaneously achieve stable energy supply, economic growth, and decarbonization. Japan will accelerate the construction of a resilient, circular economy and social system. By harnessing innovation across various fields, including AI, Japan aims to realize sustainable growth through solving societal challenges.

B. The principles of "leave no one behind" and "everyone can make it happen" are paramount. While population decline and a society with a declining birthrate and an aging population pose significant challenges for Japan, they also present opportunities to foster a society where diverse individuals thrive, support each other, and are valued. Realizing such a society will also enhance each person's well-being, encompassing physical, mental, and social happiness. Japan will continue to commit itself with an all-Japan approach to achieving the SDGs.

C. As a country at the forefront of addressing challenges, Japan will model its efforts and knowledge towards realizing a sustainable economy and society for the international community. However, it is important to recognize that it is no longer in an era where norms, technologies, and funds flow unidirectionally from developed to developing countries. Japan aims to promote the co-creation of value through dialogue and collaboration with developing countries and their people, in pursuit of a sustainable society by 2030 and beyond. Potential areas for advancing these efforts include:

(i) Declining Birthrate and Aging Population: While the timing varies, declining birthrates and population aging as well as the resultant population decrease are inevitable challenges for most countries. Japan's initiatives can serve as a model for other countries in building a sustainable economy and society amid population decline and an aging society. In facing severe conditions due to the concentration of the population in Tokyo, it is key to advance efforts to maximize the potential of each region.

(ii) Local Development: The Japanese government intends to advance initiatives that support youth and women, relocate industries, government, and academia to regional communities, promote innovation, and develop new-era infrastructure. The role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is particularly important. Supporting SMEs in their efforts to achieve the SDGs is believed to contribute to creating autonomous and sustainable economies and societies that capitalize on regional characteristics.

(iii) Disaster Risk Reduction: Disaster risk reduction measures that consider climate change risks will become increasingly important. Efforts to strengthen initiatives that contribute to disaster risk reduction, and national resilience will continue.

D. Japan is committed to realizing a future of peace, freedom, and prosperity based on the principles of human dignity and human security. The international community must share this responsibility and strengthen multilateralism. From this perspective, Japan welcomes the outcomes of the 2024 UN Summit of the Future and will contribute to their implementation. Furthermore, recognizing the necessity of women's equal and full participation in international peace, conflict prevention, and resolution, Japan will continue to strongly promote the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

E. Bearing in mind that the aforementioned elements are key to ensuring sustainable growth and the sustainability of the international community as a whole for future generations, Japan aims to play a leading role in discussions and rule-making on international sustainability post-2030.

F. As outlined in Japan's SDG Implementation Guiding Principles revised in December 2023, the government will continue to take proactive leadership, encouraging active participation from diverse sectors and fostering collaboration and cooperation to pave the way for achieving the SDGs. The SDGs Promotion Headquarters will regularly review the progress of initiatives based on the Implementation Guiding Principles and revise it every four years or as necessary.